

## Accommodations Toolkit

# Spell Check: States' Accessibility Policies, 2023



This summary of states' accessibility policies for **spell check** is part of the *Accommodations Toolkit* published by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO)[[1](#)]. The toolkit also contains a [summary of the research literature on spell check \(/nceo/accommodations-toolkit/spell-check-research\)](#).

Accessibility policies often have several tiers of accessibility features: universal features, designated features, and accommodations.[[2](#)]. Figure 1 summarizes how states included spell check in their accessibility policies for students with disabilities in 2023. Figure 2 summarizes how states included spell check in their accessibility policies for English learners in 2023. Table 1 shows how spell check was included in the policies, while Table 2 contains additional details and specifications.

**Figure 1. States' Accessibility Policies for Students with Disabilities for Spell Check, 2023**

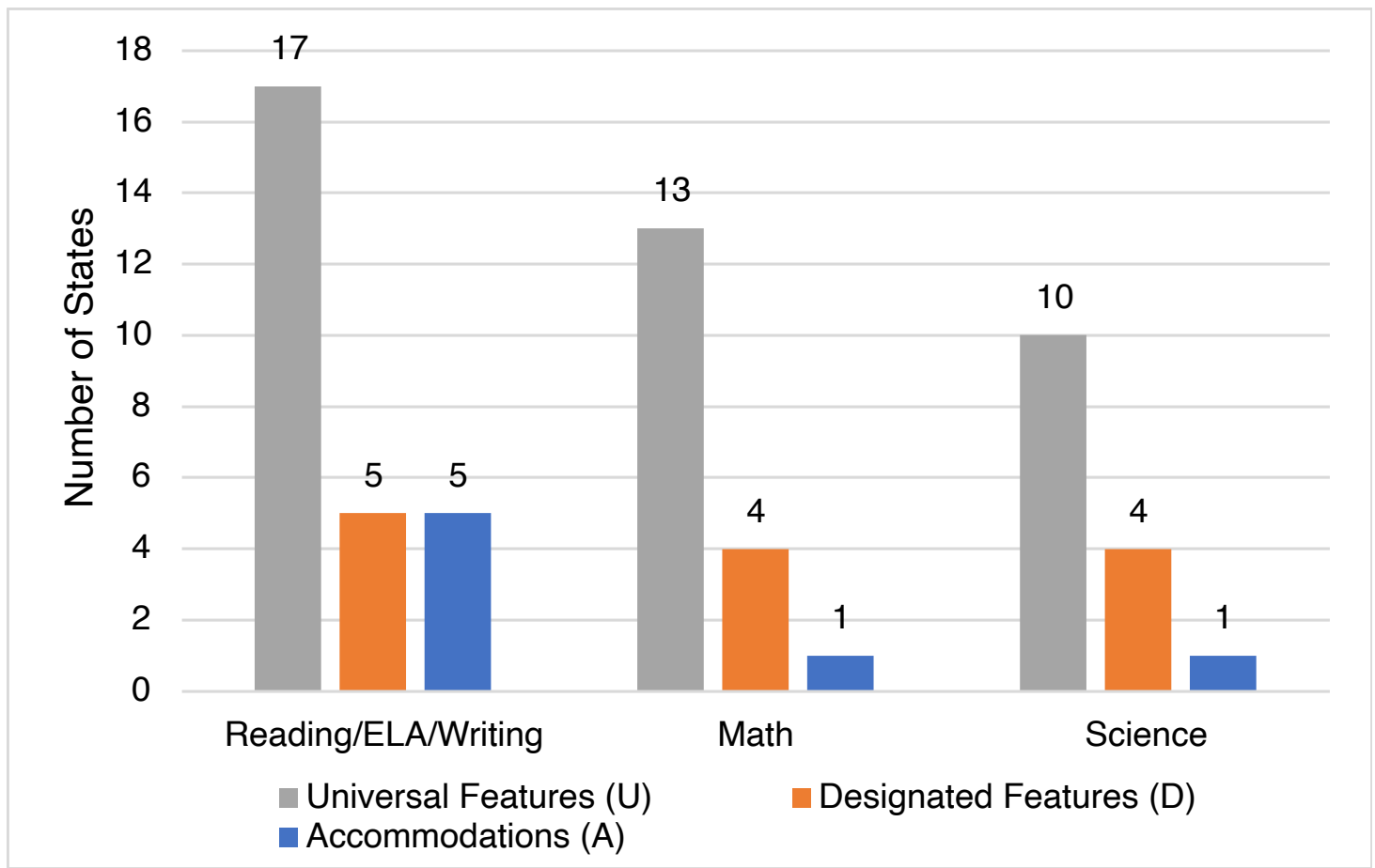


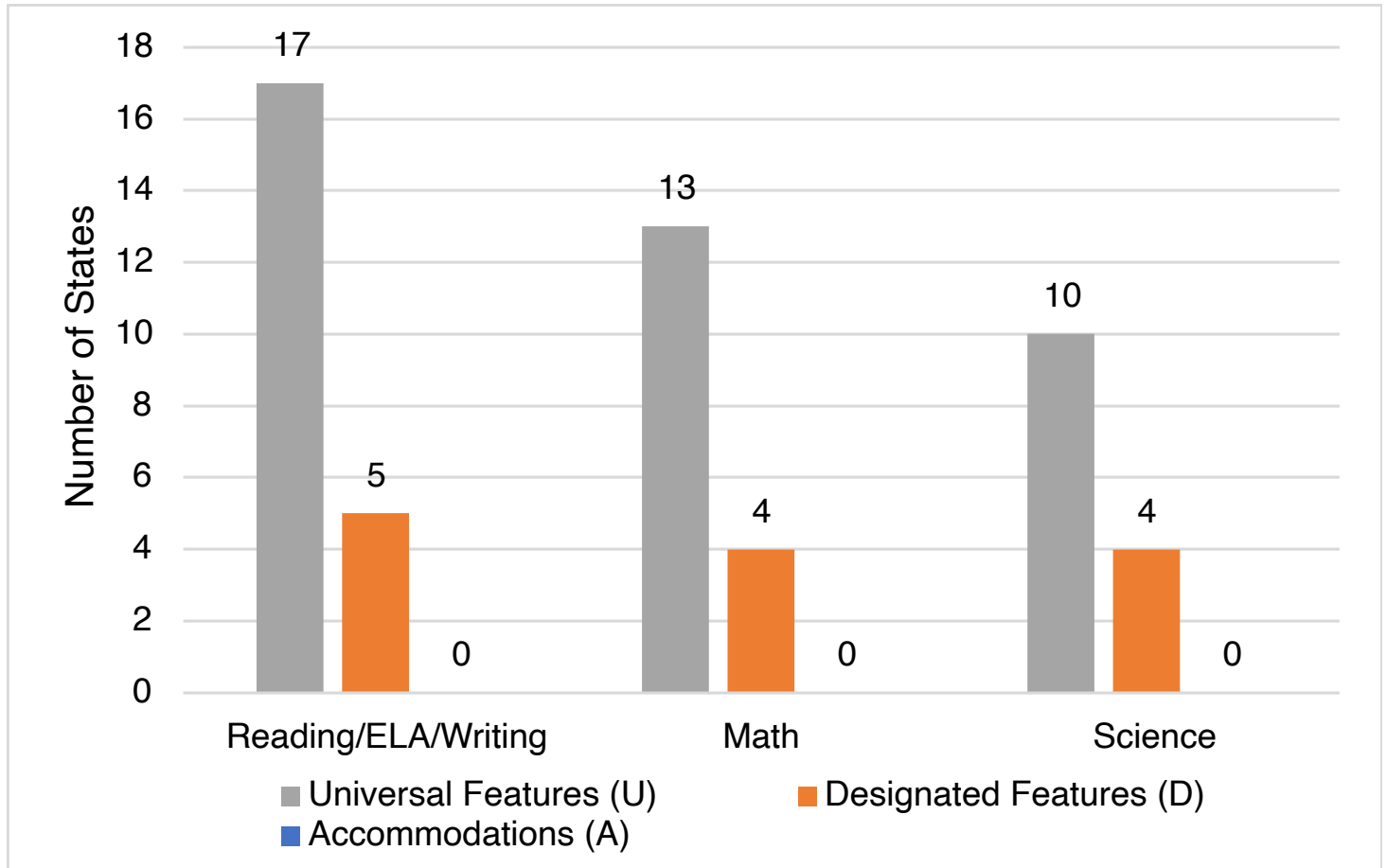
**Figure 2. States' Accessibility Policies for English Learners for Spell Check, 2023**

**Table 1. Accommodations Policies for Spell Check by State, 2023**

U = Universal Feature, D = Designated Feature, A = Accommodation, ELA = English Language Arts, X = Allowed, SD =

| State                | Reading/ELA/Writing |   |    | Math |
|----------------------|---------------------|---|----|------|
|                      | U                   | D | A  | U    |
| Alabama              | P                   | P | P  | P    |
| Alaska               | P                   | P | P  | P    |
| Arizona              |                     |   |    |      |
| Arkansas             |                     |   | SD |      |
| California           | X                   |   |    | X    |
| Colorado             |                     | X |    |      |
| Connecticut          | X                   |   |    | X    |
| Delaware             | X                   |   |    | X    |
| District of Columbia |                     | X |    |      |

|                      |   |   |    |   |
|----------------------|---|---|----|---|
| <b>Florida</b>       | P | P | P  | P |
| <b>Georgia</b>       | P | P | P  | P |
| <b>Hawaii</b>        | X |   |    |   |
| <b>Idaho</b>         | X |   |    | X |
| <b>Illinois</b>      |   | X |    |   |
| <b>Indiana</b>       | X |   |    |   |
| <b>Iowa</b>          |   |   |    |   |
| <b>Kansas</b>        |   |   |    |   |
| <b>Kentucky</b>      |   |   |    |   |
| <b>Louisiana</b>     |   |   |    |   |
| <b>Maine</b>         |   |   |    |   |
| <b>Maryland</b>      | X |   |    | X |
| <b>Massachusetts</b> |   |   | SD |   |
| <b>Michigan</b>      | P | P | P  | P |

|                       |   |   |    |   |
|-----------------------|---|---|----|---|
| <b>Minnesota</b>      |   |   |    |   |
| <b>Mississippi</b>    | P | P | P  | P |
| <b>Missouri</b>       |   |   |    |   |
| <b>Montana</b>        | X |   |    | X |
| <b>Nebraska</b>       |   |   |    |   |
| <b>Nevada</b>         | X |   |    | X |
| <b>New Hampshire</b>  |   |   |    |   |
| <b>New Jersey</b>     |   | X |    |   |
| <b>New Mexico</b>     | X |   |    | X |
| <b>New York</b>       |   |   | SD |   |
| <b>North Carolina</b> |   |   |    |   |
| <b>North Dakota</b>   | X |   |    | X |
| <b>Ohio</b>           | P | P | P  | X |

|                       |   |   |    |   |
|-----------------------|---|---|----|---|
| <b>Oklahoma</b>       | P | P | P  | P |
| <b>Oregon</b>         | X |   |    | X |
| <b>Pennsylvania</b>   | P | P | P  | P |
| <b>Rhode Island</b>   |   |   | SD |   |
| <b>South Carolina</b> |   |   |    |   |
| <b>South Dakota</b>   | X |   |    | X |
| <b>Tennessee</b>      | P | P | P  | P |
| <b>Texas</b>          |   | X |    |   |
| <b>Utah</b>           | X |   |    |   |
| <b>Vermont</b>        |   |   |    |   |
| <b>Virginia</b>       |   |   | SD |   |
| <b>Washington</b>     | X |   |    | X |
| <b>West Virginia</b>  | X |   |    |   |

|                                                   |    |   |   |    |
|---------------------------------------------------|----|---|---|----|
| <b>Wisconsin</b>                                  |    |   |   |    |
| <b>Wyoming</b>                                    | X  |   |   |    |
| <b>Total<br/>(Students with<br/>Disabilities)</b> | 17 | 5 | 5 | 13 |
| <b>Total (English<br/>Learners)</b>               | 17 | 5 | 0 | 13 |

Note: Blank cell = no policy found

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**Table 2. Details and Specifications: States' Spell Check Accessibility Policies**

| State      | Details/Specifications                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Alabama    | Any grammar, internet, or file-storing functions must be disabled [from Assistive Technology].                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Alaska     | <p>The following are examples of modifications that are not allowed on most standardized assessments. Educators must read the test administration directions for the specific assessment prior to administering the test to ensure that the test is not inadvertently invalidated. Modifications will invalidate an assessment because they change what the assessment is measuring or give the student an unfair advantage. This is not an exhaustive list of modifications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using spell or grammar check</li> </ul> |
| Arkansas   | <p><b>Accommodation:</b></p> <p>Spell Checker (Electronic and External): Hand-held device used to correct spelling errors on the writing essay for paper testing. Electronic devices may not have word prediction, a thesaurus, or contain definitions.</p> <p>Recommended Usage: Examinees whose spelling errors impact their writing to the point of being incomprehensible to others.</p> <p>Notes: General spelling is not scored. Grammar check must be turned off.</p>                                                                                       |
| California | <p><b>Universal Feature:</b></p> <p>Spell check: The writing tool a student can use for checking the spelling of words in student-generated responses, spell check, gives only an indication that a word is misspelled. It does not provide the correct spelling. This tool is available only on the specific items for which the <i>Smarter Balanced Item Specifications</i> indicated as appropriate.</p>                                                                                                                                                        |
| Colorado   | <p><b>Embedded or Locally Provided Tools (Designated Feature) (ELA):</b></p> <p>Spell Check checks the student's constructed responses for spelling. External spell check device provided by school.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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| <b>Connecticut</b>          | <p><b>Universal Feature (Math, ELA):</b></p> <p>Spell Check (Math and ELA open-ended items): Writing tool for checking the spelling of words in student-generated responses. Spell check only gives an indication that a word is misspelled; it does not provide the correct spelling. This tool is available only with the specific items for which the Smarter Balanced Item Specifications indicated that it would be appropriate. Spell check is bundled with other embedded writing tools for math and ELA items with open-ended student responses.</p>            |
| <b>Delaware</b>             | <p><b>Universal Feature:</b></p> <p>Writing tool for checking the spelling of words in student-generated responses. Spell check only gives an indication that a word is misspelled; it does not provide the correct spelling. This tool is available only with the specific items for which the DeSSA Item Specifications indicated that it would be appropriate. Spell check is bundled with other embedded writing tools for all performance task full writes (planning, drafting, revising, and editing). A full write is the second part of a performance task.</p> |
| <b>District of Columbia</b> | <p><b>Accessibility Feature (Designated Feature):</b></p> <p>Spell Check or External Spell Check Device: The student uses the embedded spell check icon in TestNav to review their written text for errors. If preferred, the student uses an external spell check device. Device may not have embedded grammar check, connect to the internet, or save information.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Florida</b>              | Devices designed to check grammar or spelling must not be used.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Georgia</b>              | Assistive technology (spelling and grammar check disabled).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Hawaii</b>               | <p><b>Universal Feature (ELA):</b></p> <p>Writing tool for checking the spelling of words in student-generated responses. Spell check only gives an indication that a word is misspelled; it does not provide the correct spelling. Spell check is bundled with other embedded writing tools for the ELA performance task full write (planning, drafting, revising, and editing). Spell check is available only for the full write, which is the second part of the ELA performance task.</p>                                                                           |

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|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Idaho</b>    | <p><b>Universal Feature (ELA, Math):</b></p> <p>Writing tool for checking the spelling of words in student-generated responses. Spell check only gives an indication that a word is misspelled; it does not provide the correct spelling. Spell check is bundled with other embedded writing tools for the ELA performance task full write (planning, drafting, revising, and editing). Spell check is available only for the full write, which is the second part of the ELA performance task.</p> |
| <b>Illinois</b> | <p><b>Accessibility Feature (Designated Feature):</b></p> <p>Spell Check or External Spell Check Device: The student uses the embedded spell check icon in TestNav to review their written text for errors. If preferred, the student uses an external spell check device. Device may not have embedded grammar check, connect to the internet, or save information.</p>                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Indiana</b>  | <p><b>Universal Feature (ELA):</b></p> <p>Rich Text Writing Tools: Bold, italic, undo/redo, and spell check are available for student-generated responses on ILEARN ELA performance tasks (writing prompts) only.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Maryland</b> | <p><b>Accessibility Feature (Universal Feature):</b></p> <p>Students who have difficulty producing written text as a result of a difficulty with language recall may benefit from the use of a dictionary or spell checker. The student uses the embedded spell check icon to review their written text for errors. If preferred, the student uses an external spell check device. Device may not have embedded grammar check, connect to the internet, or save information.</p>                    |

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| <b>Massachusetts</b> | <p><b>Accommodation (ELA):</b></p> <p>Spell-checker for ELA, including an external spell-checking device for the paper-based test; or in conjunction with the typed response accommodation for the paper-based test:</p> <p>This accommodation is intended for a small number of students with disabilities that severely limit or prevent them from spelling correctly, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so.</p> <p>The student must meet all of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be unable to spell simple words (i.e., at the beginning stages of learning how to spell), as documented by locally administered diagnostic evaluations</li> <li>• produce understandable written work only when provided this accommodation, which the student uses during routine instruction</li> <li>• receive ongoing intervention to learn the skill</li> </ul> <p>The student may <i>not</i> use grammar check or access the internet during the test.</p> |
| <b>Michigan</b>      | <p>Use of word processor for constructed response items (word prediction/spell check turned off).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Mississippi</b>   | <p>Prohibited Functionalities: If the software allows for macros, spelling autocorrect, grammar autocorrect, or word prediction, then those features must be turned off.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Montana</b>       | <p><b>Universal Feature (ELA, Math):</b></p> <p>Writing tool for checking the spelling of words in student-generated responses. Spell check only gives an indication that a word is misspelled; it does not provide the correct spelling. This tool is available only with the specific items for which the Smarter Balanced Item Specifications indicated that it would be appropriate. Spell check is bundled with other embedded writing tools for math and ELA items with open-ended student responses.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Nevada</b>        | <p><b>Universal Feature (ELA, Math):</b></p> <p>Writing tool for checking the spelling of words in student-generated responses. Spell check only gives an indication that a word is misspelled; it does not provide the correct spelling. This tool is available only with the specific items for which the Smarter Balanced Item Specifications indicate that it would be appropriate. Spell check is bundled with other embedded writing tools for math and ELA items with open-ended student responses.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

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| <b>New Jersey</b>   | <p><b>Accessibility Feature (Designated Feature):</b></p> <p>Spell Check or External Spell-Check Device: The student uses the embedded spell-check icon in TestNav to review their written text for errors. If preferred, the student uses an external spellcheck device. Device may not have embedded grammar check, connect to the internet, or save information.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>New Mexico</b>   | <p><b>Universal Feature:</b></p> <p>For constructed response items, students have access to a spell checking tool that flags words that the student misspells within Kite Student Portal.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>New York</b>     | <p><b>Accommodation:</b></p> <p>A “spell check device/software” may be used as a testing accommodation on any State assessment or Regents Examination in accordance with the testing accommodations recommendations documented in the student’s IEP/504 plan. For students with disabilities who participate in the Grades 3–8 ELA Tests, the recommendation for this testing accommodation on all tests (which would include the Grades 3–8 ELA Tests) is appropriate only for students with disabilities that severely limit their ability to spell words while writing/typing. A recommendation for a “spell check device/software” as a testing accommodation for students in grades 3–8 should be informed by evaluative information indicating that, even after explicit, systematic, and research-based spelling instruction, the student’s disability precludes or severely limits his/her ability to spell words, including words at the early stages of spelling skill development.</p> |
| <b>North Dakota</b> | <p><b>Universal Feature:</b></p> <p>Writing tool for checking the spelling of words in student-generated responses. Spellcheck only indicates that a word is misspelled; it does not provide the correct spelling.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

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| <b>Ohio</b>         | <p><b>Universal Feature (Math, Science):</b></p> <p>Spellcheck: This feature allows the student to check the spelling of words in student-generated responses. Spellcheck is available for items that require a student to type a constructed response. Unlike some word processing programs, the Test Delivery System does not automatically highlight misspelled words as the student types. Students must click the ABC button to check spelling. Spellcheck is not allowed on the English language arts OST. There are no typewritten responses for mathematics.</p> <p><b>Designated Feature (Math, Science):</b></p> <p>Spellchecker—handheld: The student uses a handheld spellchecker during testing instead of the universal spellcheck embedded in the Test Delivery System. A handheld spellchecker may not be used on English language arts tests. Spellcheckers may not connect to the internet, store information or include definitions, phrases, sentences or pictures. The student should be familiar with the spellchecker that will be used during testing.</p> |
| <b>Oklahoma</b>     | <p>Student utilizes an electronic input device without the “help” features, such as spell check, an electronic dictionary, a thesaurus, or access to the Internet.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Oregon</b>       | <p><b>Universal Feature:</b></p> <p>Writing tool for checking the spelling of words in student-generated responses. Spell check only gives an indication that a word is misspelled; it does not provide the correct spelling. This tool is available only with specific items for which the OSAS item specifications indicate that it would be appropriate. Spell check is bundled with other embedded writing tools for mathematics items, ELA items, and ELPA items with open-ended student responses.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Pennsylvania</b> | <p>NO internet, grammar, punctuation, spell-check, dictionary, thesaurus, content-specific word prediction lists, apps or formulas may be turned on or used for the student responses.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Rhode Island</b> | <p><b>Accommodation (ELA):</b></p> <p>Spell-checker for the ELA Test: The student has a disability that affects their ability to spell and requires a spell-checking device or software. Students who receive this accommodation must meet the criteria below.</p> <p>Criteria: This accommodation is intended for a student who has a documented disability that severely limits or prevents them from spelling correctly, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so, as documented by locally administered diagnostic evaluations. The student must meet <i>all</i> of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student is virtually unable to spell simple words (i.e., at the beginning stages of learning how to spell);</li> <li>• The student produces understandable written work only when provided this accommodation, which the student uses during routine instruction; and</li> <li>• The student receives ongoing intervention to learn the skill.</li> </ul> <p>External Spell-Checker: The student will use an external spell-checking device for ELA. Grammar check and internet access must be turned off.</p> |
| <b>South Dakota</b> | <p><b>Universal Feature:</b></p> <p>Writing tool for checking the spelling of words in student-generated responses. Spell check only gives an indication that a word is misspelled; it does not provide the correct spelling. This tool is available only with the specific items for which the Item Specifications indicated that it would be appropriate. Spell check is bundled with other embedded writing tools for math and ELA items with open-ended student responses.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Tennessee</b>    | <p>Internet access, spell check, grammar check, and word prediction ahead functions must be turned off.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

**Texas****Designated Feature (ELA, Science):**

**Spelling Assistance:** This designated support provides various types of spelling assistance for students with disabilities.

A student may use this designated support if the student:

- routinely, independently, and effectively uses this designated support during classroom instruction and classroom testing;
- receives Section 504 or special education services; and
- organizes and develops ideas and understands the basic function and use of written language conventions (e.g., sentence structures, irregular verbs) but has a disability that is so severe that the student cannot apply basic spelling rules or word patterns (e.g., prefixes, suffixes) to written responses.

For a student who meets the eligibility criteria, this designated support may be used on:

- STAAR
  - grades 3–8 RLA, English I, and English II
  - grades 3–5 Spanish RLA
  - grades 5 and 8 science and Biology
  - grade 5 Spanish science
  - grade 8 social studies and U.S. History

This designated support may include **only**:

- visual sound cards;
- frequently misspelled word list (e.g., student-made, teacher-made, commercially produced);
- spell check function on a word processor or as an online embedded support on STAAR that can be accessed via permissive mode, a secondary device, or by using the embedded tool in TDS;
- pocket spellchecker;
- word prediction software that can be accessed via permissive mode, a secondary device, or by using the embedded tool in TDS; and
- STT software, applications, or devices, including the use of the STT online embedded support in TDS.

|                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Utah</b>          | <p><b>Universal Feature (ELA – Writing Only):</b></p> <p>Students who have difficulty producing text due to the speed with which they are able to enter keystrokes, or who have difficulty with language recall, may benefit from spell check or word prediction software for instruction. On assessments, spell check or word prediction may or may not be available, or only available on items where it would not violate the construct of the item. For example, spell check would not be available on writing passages that are assessing spelling.</p> |
| <b>Virginia</b>      | <p><b>Universal Feature (ELA – Writing Only):</b></p> <p>Students who have difficulty producing text due to the speed with which they are able to enter keystrokes, or who have difficulty with language recall, may benefit from spell check or word prediction software for instruction. On assessments, spell check or word prediction may or may not be available, or only available on items where it would not violate the construct of the item. For example, spell check would not be available on writing passages that are assessing spelling.</p> |
| <b>Washington</b>    | <p><b>Universal Feature:</b></p> <p>A writing tool for checking the spelling of words in student responses. Spell check only highlights misspelled words; it does not provide the correct spelling.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>West Virginia</b> | <p><b>Universal Feature (ELA – Writing):</b></p> <p>Writing tool for checking the spelling of words in student-generated responses. Spell check gives an indication a word is misspelled and offers a correct spelling. Spell check is bundled with other embedded writing tools for all full writes (planning, drafting, revising, and editing).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Wyoming</b>       | <p><b>Universal Feature (ELA):</b></p> <p>Writing tool for checking the spelling of words in student-generated responses. Spell check only gives an indication that a word is misspelled and provides a list of word options. This tool is available only for the Writing assessment.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

## Footnotes

▶ [1]

States' accessibility policies on spell check were obtained through the examination and analysis of publicly available information, including accommodations manuals or other policy documents, on state department of education websites. The policies were gathered from states' websites between August and December 2023. The information in the tables from each state was coded based on information in the state policy.

▶ [2]

*Universal Features* are available to all students as they access instructional or assessment content. *Designated Features* are available to any student as long as an educator (or team of educators, with student and parent input) indicates that they would be helpful given the student's characteristics and needs. *Accommodations* are changes in procedures or materials to ensure equitable access to instructional and assessment content and generate valid assessment results for students who need them. Accommodations are generally available to students for whom there is documentation on an individualized education program (IEP) or 504 accommodations plan; some states also have offered accommodations to English learners.

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